

Gambit Elseworlds: From the Shadows

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Summary: A Elseworlds story about what may have happened had Remy left New Orleans before meeting Jean-Luc

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* * * Gambit Elseworlds:

* From the Shadows

* * An awful screech of metal on metal vibrated throughout the entire cabin as the train slowed to a shuddering halt. The screeching noise finally subsided as the train gave on last shudder before settling on its hydraulics. Inside the dark recesses of one of the train's boxcars, a group of raggedly dressed figures huddled closer together. They really didn't know each other and had no ties to each other beyond the bonds that tie fellow vagabonds together. Never the less, the unwritten laws of the homeless bonded them together in a tight almost family-like network.

* Other than the huddled forms, the boxcar was mostly empty, its cargo of lumber divested in some past city. A few scraps still remained to litter the floor, but not enough with which to attempt a fire. Even if there had been sufficient wood, the group of vagabonds probably wouldn't have attempted to build a fire anyway. Open flames tended to attract the attention of individuals that they would just rather avoid. Thus, they contented themselves, huddling together and relying on the their mutual body heats to keep the inside of the boxcar warm.

* Curiously a young boy separated himself from the huddled mass and crept over to where a few tendrils of light managed to leak between the cracks in the door. The young urchin slowly pressed his face against the crack to allow his crystal blue eyes access view to the outside. He nearly gasped in dismay at the scene that greeted him. Across the darkened terrain small patches of partially melted snow coated the ground and a bitterly cold wind howled across the dark, grimy train station. A small gust managed to enter in though the crack, instantly chilling his face.

* At the touch of the icy wind, the boy hurriedly backed away from

the opening, tripping and landing on his bottom with a loud thump in his haste. The child huddled inside his oversized coat and shivered inwardly at the prospect of staying in city such as this one. Having been acclimated to the far gentler Louisiana climate, he was not looking forward to the first night that he would have to spend in this city's dismal cold.

* "Remy boy," one of the raggedly dressed forms rasped. "Come away from there. You're gonna' loose all your body heat."

* The young boy quickly complied, scrambling to his feet and then rejoining the tightly huddled mass of bodies. He knew that all too soon, he would have to part ways with this small group of fellow vagabonds and wanted to take every advantage of their company possible for the moment. As the young boy settled back into place he once again belated wished that he had chosen the train bound for Miami as opposed to the one bound for New York.

* Remy was the youngest by far of all of the current companions, having accumulated little more than nine years of life. He knew, however, from his life on the street that his age would make no difference in their eyes. Each one of these men would turn on him just as violently as they would turn on each other if they suspected that he might be a threat to them or their meager possessions. And, should he die, his own possessions would be subject to the same rules of seizure that applied to the others. After all, those rules of seizure were the only reason that he had been able to obtain a winter coat sufficiently thick to withstand the colder northern temperatures.

* "It be mighty cold out t'ere," he whispered to no one in specific. "What city be t'is anyway?"

* "Doesn't matter," came a rumbled reply from another one of the roughly dressed forms. "Just another stop 'til we reach New York City."

* The boy thought it over, then shrugged before settling back into a partially reclined position, with his back leaning against the wall. For him, it didn't really matter where he was at that precise moment, so long as he as far away from New Orleans as possible. The fact that New York was much greater distance from Louisiana than Florida was played greatly in his decision to jump aboard a train marked New York bound as opposed to one that was headed for Miami. It was, the boy now belatedly realized, a decision that he was coming to regret.

* Then again, regrets over hasty decisions seemed to be becoming the hallmark of his young life. He had bitterly regretted the decision to follow one of his curious whims when he saw a pretty blond-headed girl led down an alley by two large, hulking men. He had even more bitterly regretted his decision to not listen to his instincts and run when he had first heard her screams. However, he had rushed in, armed with two hammers that he had stolen from a construction site earlier that day and some ridiculous noble sentiment.

* He had arrived just in time to see one of them impale the little girl with a knife. Using the element of surprise, he had managed to knock one of them senseless before the assassin's partner drew a wicked looking handgun and opened fire. Only Remy's knowledge of the back-alleys of New Orleans and his ability to slide through tight and restrictive areas had saved him.

* That, unfortunately, had not been the end of the story. A few days later, one of Remy's fellow street urchins had told him that some people in suits had been asking around about him. It hadn't taken the young boy long to put the pieces together from there. The next day, he had stuffed his few possessions into an old, worn

pillowcase and had snuck aboard the first train heading out of New Orleans. A few hours after he had left the actual city, the train arrived in a small station on the border between Louisiana and Mississippi. He had spent the night at that train station and the next day made his second great mistake of opting to travel to New York instead of Miami.

* Remy buried the lower portion of his face into his worn scarf and closed his eyes again. He still hadn't quite figured out what it was that he intended to do once he managed to reach New York. The only dominating thought that had been in his mind at the time that he boarded the train was getting away. He hadn't really spent that much time considering what it was that he was running to. Now, with his journey nearing its conclusion in just a few more days, reality was rapidly catching up with him.

* He supposed that he would quickly go back to picking pockets and running messages on the streets. However, without Fagan to act as a fence for him, he knew that he would have a lot more trouble getting any money for the baubles that he would be able to pocket. That meant that he would need to try to steal more cash, and less jewelry. Then there was also the matter of finding a suitable place to sleep at night. He somehow felt that hard cement insulated by newspaper was going to work as well for him here as it did in the Big Easy. Maybe during the summer, but in the winter, he would definitely need to find some sort of adequate shelter.

* Remy snuggled a little deeper into his coat, dismissed his thoughts and worries, and attempted to return to the blessed oblivion of sleep, where the cold didn't completely reach him. The boy was just on the verge of realizing his ambition when he, along with the other vagabonds was roused by the sounds of approaching voices.

* "...checked all these carts back in Chicago..."

* "...never can be too sure. Besides, we've got tight orders these days. Mayor's tryin' to make re-election..."

* "...can't believe the guy actually wants another four years as head of this cesspool..."

* "...I believe it's called fortitude..."

* "...gonna' need more than that. This city chews up mayors and leaves them out ta' rot..."

* The group of men shifted nervously as the voices continued to approach, accompanied by the sounds of boxcar doors being opened, checked, then resealed. Remy tensed, knowing that while his companions in all likely-hood would just be scattered, he could easily be taken in to custody and shipped off to some state institution, a concept that held no real appeal to the young boy's mind.

* The boy flinched as the doors to their car were thrown open, allowing a frigid blast of wind to enter into the car. The men instinctively shied away from the probing flashlight that cut a swathe through the evening gloom and partially blinded their light sensitive eyes. Remy held up his hand to block out the painful glare as he shivered from the sudden blast of cold.

* "Looks like we've got ourselves a winner here," the man holding the flashlight stated. "All right boys. I imagine that most of ya' already know this drill. Everyone out and line up by the side of the car."

* Remy's companions grumbled bitterly but slowly complied to the man's authoritarian demands. Within a few minutes, they were all lined up by the side of the car, shivering mercilessly in the cold. The man that held the flashlight appeared to be an officer of some sort though he uniform looked as if he had slept in it. He was heavy set and looked as if he hadn't shaved in several days. He puffed away

at a large cigar as he passed an appraising eye over the group. That appraising eye stopped suddenly when it caught sight of Remy.

* "Little young ta' be out here in this part of town, aren't ya', kid?" his growl was probably meant to be intimidating, but Remy simply ignored it.

* "One of these guy's your dad, kid?" the officer indicated the row of vagabonds.

* "Non," Remy shook his head.

* "Well, were are your parents?"

* Remy gave a careless shrug in reply. It was a question that he had been asked several times and was quickly learning how to dodge it. "My pere, he live round here pretty close. I jus came here t' see de trains an' get inta' a little trouble."

* The officer gave him a suspicious look. "I see, and your father doesn't worry about you running off to the train yards by yourself in the middle of the night?"

* "Oh, he'll be plenty mad when he finds out t'at I been here." Remy put on one of his most charming boyish grins. "I be one of t'ose young rebellious types."

* The cop chewed on his cigar as he stared down at Remy. The boy could tell that this man wasn't entirely buying his story. "All right kid, why don't we take you to my car and I can give ya' a ride home. Then I can have a word with your father about lettin' run around in the worst sections of town in the middle of the night."

* Remy kept his expression carefully neutral, even though he was seething inside. He needed to get away from this cop fast, before he ended up in a boarding house for run-aways. Remy had spent time in such a house once before and it was not an experience that he cared to repeat. The boy's mind spun frantically as he tried to think of a way out of his current situation.

* "T'ere ain't no need for t'at officer." the boy pushed his charm as far as he could. "T'at be my fat'er over t'ere." He indicated a spot behind the police officer's back.

* It was one of the oldest tricks in the book. But for some reason, almost every cop that he had ever met fell for it all of the time. The burly man turned his head and averted his attention for just a moment, but a moment was all the time that Remy needed. He quickly dropped to the ground and slithered through a small place between the wheel of the train.

* "Hey!! Get back her ya' little punk!!" Remy simply ignored the shouting cop and rolled out from under the train on the other side. He knew that the space was far to constrictive for the heavy man to attempt to follow him underneath the train as well. Thus the cop would be force to walk around until he could find some gap to squeeze through. Remy was confident that he would be long gone by then.

* He took off in a dead sprint, moving as quickly as his legs could carry him. A part of his mind registered mild disappointment at not being able to make it all the way to New York City. Still, if it continued to get much colder the farther that he traveled northward, he wasn't sure that he really wanted to go to New York anymore. Besides, from what he had managed to see of this city as they were coming in, it looked more than large enough to suit his tastes, even if it was a bit ugly.

* With a breathless grin, Remy set off to explore his new home.

* * * A few days later, Remy was no longer as exited about his new home as he had been on the onset. The city was terminally overcast with clouds of smog and soot There were nearly twice the number of homeless vagabonds on every street corner, making the competition for places next to heating grates a lot stiffer. He would see more violent crime in a day here, than he would normally see in a

week in New Orleans and, to top everything off, he still didn't even know the name of this forsaken pit into which he had fallen.

* Remy huddled in deeper into the pile of newspapers that he had managed to scrounge up that day and tried to ignore the incessant rumbling of his stomach. He hadn't been having a great deal of luck with his trade in this city either. Almost all of the citizens seemed to be perpetually broke or were just accustomed to not carrying a great deal of cash on them. Of the four pinches that he had managed in the last two days, he had only garnered six dollars, and a couple of food stamps.

* Remy knew that if he didn't manage to find some money fast, that he could be in some serious trouble. With the unrelenting cold of this city, he was losing a little more of his strength every day. It wasn't going to be long before he no longer had the ability to pick pockets. Then, he would have to turn to less savory means of acquiring money. Remy shuddered at just the thought. He had heard too many horror stories from his fellow street urchins about things that happened to boys who tried turning tricks for cash.

* All things considered, Remy considered his decision to stay in this city the greatest in a long series of fantastic mistakes. He didn't know what he had been thinking when he took off running from that cop. He should have found another train to hide in until the officer had given up looking for him. Then, he could have easily found another train that would have taken him the rest of the way to New York City. Instead he had followed his rash impulses and stayed in this forlorn, unknown urban cesspool.

* The boy's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of a large, approaching car. Remy warily poked his head out of the pile of newspapers to view the new arrival. He was careful to keep himself as concealed as possible, a young boy living on the streets didn't want to attract any undue attention to himself. He had been expecting perhaps a patrol car, or maybe some pimp's lowrider. Thus he was quite surprised when he was instead greeted by the sight of an elegant Mercedes Benz.

* The boy rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was seeing things correctly. Why would any one who could afford such a car be driving it around one of the worst sections of town. Remy was even more surprised when the glittering silver car rolled to a stop. His gut level instincts were yelling at him to leave as quickly as he could. There was no good reason for an expensive car, which obviously belonged to someone who had cash to spare to be in this part of town. However, his intense curiosity overrode his better judgment as he slowly crept closer to where the car had stopped.

* Remy watched in fascination as the driver's side door opened to admit a distinguished looking gentleman who was in what Remy would guess was his late forties. His mustache was immaculately trimmed and his hairline had already receded to the top of his head. The man's movements were the epitome of elegant precision as he closed his door, then stepped around the car to open the door for a passenger riding in the rear of the car.

* The boy had to fight to keep his eyes from popping out of his head at the sight of the man that step out of the car. He had rarely in his life seen someone that literally emanated power and prestige as much as this man did. He was a tall and imposing figure who appeared to be in his mid to late twenties, easily six foot three, with dark wavy hair that was neatly trimmed and groomed. He was dressed in a charcoal black three-piece business suit, which looked like it had just come off a designer room floor. Remy looked longingly at the heavy dark gray coat that he wore to complete the outfit.

* The Cajun boy was careful to stay in the shadows and out of the man's line of view. He couldn't see his eyes, which were hidden behind a pair of heavy shades. But his face looked imposing enough to instill a deep respect, bordering on fear, for this mysterious individual.

* He watched in confusion as the man slowly stepped away from the car and began to slowly walk down the alley. Remy turned his attention to the older man, who was obviously some kind of personal servant, half expecting him to follow his master. However, he simply remained by the car, looking on sadly. The younger man was now kneeling by a corner, laying two single roses on the sidewalk with a tone of reverence. He slowly stood again, his body stance told Remy that the man's mind was a thousand miles away.

* The boy decided that he had seen more than enough. He didn't care who these people were. They obviously had money to spare and Remy really needed a fat pinch right now to help him get through these lean winter months. Besides, the man's mind looked so far away that Remy would probably be able to steal the man's underwear off of him without attracting his attention. The boy grinned widely at the prospect of being able to buy a nice warm jacket and some hot food.

* Remy waited another ten minutes, until the man pulled himself out of his reverie and slowly began to walk back towards his car, before making a move. As the dark-haired man passed the alley where the young thief was concealed, Remy came dashing out and crashed head on into the man. As they collided, Remy's hand snaked out into the man's coat and snagged something that felt like leather before falling back from the man and landing on the sidewalk.

* The boy quickly concealed his prize as the stared up at the man with the best expression of surprise and innocent confusion that he could manage. He couldn't read the man's expression that well, as his eyes were hidden behind his sunglasses, but he suspected that the man might be fairly suspicious. If anything, Remy knew when to make a timely exit. He quickly pulled himself to his feet and continued at a moderate run down the next alley, as if his intentions had been to head in that direction all along.

* He had only made it about fifteen paces when he heard the man yell. "Hey you!! Come back here!!"

* Remy's moderated run then turned into a full sprint as he took off down the alleyway as fast as his legs would carry him. He could hear the sounds of the man pursuing him, his footsteps surprisingly light for a man of his size and stature. Remy risked a quick glance over his shoulder and saw that the man was gaining quickly on him. If he didn't do something quickly, his pursuer would easily take him within the next fifteen seconds.

* The young thief ducked down a side alley where he knew that they would be forced to navigate through a maze of garbage and debris. Remy had learned the layout of the alley the other day and thus knew how best to quickly move through the obstructions. The fact that he was as agile as a cat didn't hurt either as he nimbly leapt over or around old crates and boxes without sacrificing any speed. As he passed by piles of debris, he would topple them behind him, further obstructing the path of his pursuer.

* After a few moments of this he turned his head to check up on the target, convinced that the man would have lost at least twenty yards on him by now. However, the young boy was dismayed to find that not only had the man not lost any ground, he had even closed the distance between them by another five yards. Remy ground his teeth in desperation and redoubled his efforts at running. Still, the man gained steadily on him.

* The young thief decided that it was time to change tactics. Ahead

of him and to his left, he saw the bottom rung of a ladder to the fire escape positioned about ten feet off of the ground. With a running bound he jumped into the wall and kicked off to get the last three feet he needed to grab the bottom rung. He then used his forward momentum to swing himself onto the first platform. Without even pausing to take a breath, he quickly dashed up the metal staircase to the second landing.

* Remy spared a quick glance at his pursuer and saw the man take a single bound to grab the bottom rung of the ladder. He shook his head in disbelief as he wondered what it was going to take to finally lose this guy. He let his gaze quickly scan his surroundings and noticed a small open window on the side of an otherwise featureless wall, across the other side of the alley. The window would be just big enough for him to squeeze through and far too small for his pursuer. Then, of course, there was the matter of it being an eight-foot horizontal jump.

* Remy heard the clang of boot on metal and knew that the dark-haired man had reached the first landing. That fact, more than anything else, made up his mind for him. With a quick prayer to whatever saint watched over fools and children, he launched himself off of the railing and across the width of the alley. He flipped forward as he flew through the air, trying to get the maximum amount of distance of his leap. While suspended in the air, the young boy belatedly realized that if he missed the window he would probably look like a great fool as well as end up in a great deal of pain.

* Fortunately, his luck and aim held true and the young boy felt the window seal barely graze his back as he sailed through the opening. Remy landed in a practiced crouch, his knees bending to absorb the shock of impact. The boy wasted no time in returning to his sprint as he quickly made his way through the abandoned structure. His pursuer could easily double around to the other side of the building to try to cut him off. Remy was determined to be long gone before the man could ever get there.

* Taking the stairs two and three at a time, Remy quickly arrived at the ground floor and left by the main entrance, which opened onto a completely different street. A few moments later, he was weaving back and forth through the alleys and side streets, intent on masking his trail to the point where no pursuer would be able to find him. After ten minutes of sustained running, Remy was satisfied that no one was on his trail any longer and leaned heavily against a brick wall to catch his breath.

* He allowed a grin of triumph to cross his face as the adrenaline rush slowly subsided. For the first time, the boy took a moment to examine his prize. It was indeed a wallet, and an expensive one at that. The label was Oliver Valentino, a name that he had heard in vague connection with fashion and expensive men's apparel. Remy opened the wallet to view its contents and nearly dropped it in shock when he saw the thick wad of twenty and fifty dollar bills. With trembling hands he slowly withdrew the assorted bills and began to count them. After reaching six hundred, the boy stopped counting and put the money away, knowing that it was the biggest single pinch that he had made in his young life.

* Remy pushed off the wall and slowly began to walk down the alley again, sifting through the other contents of the wallet as he walked. There were very few pictures in the wallet, mostly ones of a small dark-haired boy and an older couple that he assumed were the boy's parents. There were assorted credit cards, all of them being gold or platinum. Once again, Remy mourned the loss of Fagan as his fence. The credit cards could have easily brought him another five hundred dollars. However, he couldn't really complain, seeing as he now had

more money than he had ever had while roaming the streets of New Orleans.

* Remy was still leafing through the wallet's contents and contemplating the things that he was going to do with the money when he walked around the corner and ended up running head first into a brick wall. Or, at least, it felt like a brick wall. Only brick walls didn't have hands that could grab onto a person's arm with a grip of steel.

* "I believe that belongs to me young man." a dark ominous voice sounded above Remy's head.

* Remy whipped his head up in disbelief to stare at the man that he had thought to have lost in the maze of alleys. Instinctively, the young thief tried to break away and run, but the iron grip that held him refused to let go.

* "Lemme go!" he yelled as he struggled futility against the man's grasp.

* "I don't think so." the man replied calmly. "Not until you return my property."

* Remy looked regretfully at the wallet, but knew that it wasn't worth spending the night in some youth detention center. He slowly extended the leather billfold to the man, who took it and placed it back within the depths of his coat.

* "Good, Now where are your parents?" he still hadn't released his grip on Remy's arm.

* "T'ey probably be at home asleep 'bout now," his lie hadn't worked well on the cop, but that didn't stop him from trying it again. "What do ya' t'ink t'ey gonna say when I tell t'em t'at some strange man be grabbin' at me in a dark alley."

* The man chuckled richly in response. "I think I know which story any one would believe if it came down to that. However, I don't think that it will ever become an issue."

* Remy glared defiantly at them man. "An' why ya' t'ink dat, m'sieur?"

* The man had removed his shades and met his glare with piercing blue eyes. "Because, you obviously don't have any parents. Otherwise you wouldn't be dressed in just one thin worn coat and you wouldn't be out on the street like this at this time of night." The man's gaze softened marginally. "How long has it been since you've eaten?"

* Remy's stomach rumbled at the mere mention of food, but he stubbornly ignored it. "Don't know what ya' talkin' bout m'sieur. My mere just cooked me up a big dinner, not more t'en four-hour's ago."

* The man's gaze was skeptical as he continued to appraise the young boy. Remy decided that he had suffered enough indignities for one night. "I gave ya' wallet back, now lemme go!"

* "Where are you staying right now?" The man's grip still did not relax in the slightest.

* "T'at don't be none of ya' business," Remy spat.

* The boy felt the man's grip tighten on his arm. "It's my business now. In case you have forgotten already, you tried to rob me." The man's voice was hard and unyielding. "Now we can do this the easy way, or I can take you down to the local police precinct and we can figure it out there. Which would you like?"

* Remy met his glare for a few more moments before finally dropping his head in defeat. "I ain't go no place ta' stay. Was sleepin' in t'at alley an' ya' car woke me up."

* "You're not from around here." The man pressed. "From your accent I would say that you're a Cajun by birth. How long have you been here?"

* He hesitated for a moment then decided that it wasn't really worth making an issue out of it. "Jus' a couple of days. Was plannin'

on movin' on soon." They studied each other in silence for a few more minutes before Remy finally tried again. "Ya' gonna' let me go now, m'sieur?"

* The man shook his head. "No, not yet. I want you to come with me first." With that, he began walking, dragging the recalcitrant young boy behind him.

* "Non, wait, m'sieur." Remy begged desperately. "I won't try ta' steal any more wallets, promise. I even go ta' de homeless shelter an get some good food an' a place ta' stay."

* The man simply ignored him and continued to drag him inexorably onward. Remy struggled for a few more moments before realizing the hopelessness of the situation. The man's grip was so tight, that he wouldn't have even been able to escape by shedding his coat. After few minutes, they exited the alley and Remy saw the Mercedes parked on the street before them. The dignified butler was waiting for them and moved to open the rear door as they approached.

* "Will we be having a guest at the manor tonight?" the butler asked in a droll voice, clipped by a thick English accent.

* "Perhaps," was the man's only response as he shoved Remy into the car.

* Remy quickly scooted to the other side of the car and noted with disappointment, though not surprise, that the door was locked and could only be opened from the front. Resigned to his fate, the boy settled down, closed his eyes, and allowed himself to enjoy the wonderful sensation of warmth inside the car. Bitter cold had been his constant companion for so long that he had almost forgotten what it felt like to be comfortably warm.

* He heard the door shut and a few moments later, they were on their way. Remy tucked his hands underneath his armpits to help them thaw out more quickly. He opened his eyes again to study the dark-haired man who was now his capture. From what he could tell, the man appeared to be a person without evil intentions. However, Remy knew from personal experience that it was impossible to recognize a pedophile on first impressions alone. He just prayed that he hadn't made another huge mistake in trying to steal this man's wallet.

* "So," man said after they had ridden for a while, "what's your name?"

* "Don't make no difference." Remy responded sullenly.

* "My dear boy," the butler said from the front seat. "It will not physically harm you to attempt to be sociable."

* Remy made no response as he turned to watch the frozen landscape pass by the window. Finally, he shrugged his shoulders and responded. "People call me Remy."

* "Well Remy," the man extended his hand. "I'm pleased to make your acquaintance."

* Remy eyed his hand suspiciously for more than a few moments. Finally, with excruciating slowness, he reached out and took the hand in his own. The Man smiled broadly as he grasped Remy's hand in a firm handshake.

* "Allow me to introduce myself," the man continued. "My name is Bruce. Bruce Wayne."

* end prologue

* * una scimmia mangia una banana ogni mezz'ora.

* * * *

End
file.